



# 2001 Wetlands Reserve Program

## Customer Focus—

The purchase of 1,249 acres of the Cabo Rojo Salt Flats by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (through a 30-year WRP easement), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund enabled the acreage to become part of National Wildlife Refuge. This purchase allows the Service to conserve and protect the single most important convergence for migratory shorebirds in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The service officially designated the salt flats a Resource Category 1, which is the highest possible ranking that can be given to a wetland area and implies that the area is considered unique and irreplaceable on a national or ecoregional basis.

The preservation of these lands is a positive step in preventing loss of habitat needed to help sustain migratory and wintering neotropical bird populations. The majority of the Cabo Rojo salt flats remain undeveloped and serve as an important stopover and wintering area for thousands of shorebirds. The salt flats are positioned in the Atlantic flyway and are a vital nesting ground for the snowy plover, least tern, Wilson's plover, black-necked stilt and killdeer. The area and its adjacent waters also provide resting and feeding habitat for several threatened and endangered species such as the piping plover, peregrine falcon, yellow-shouldered blackbird, brown pelican, manatee and several species of sea turtles. Indeed, no fewer than 118 bird species have been recorded for the area.

## Caribbean Area Summary

### Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements.

The tropical wetland system is identified by about 20 wetlands meriting attention in the Caribbean Area. Special attention is also being placed in another 26 areas, which contain wetland areas for conducting research and educational studies as well recreation.

### Accomplishments

Steel plates were used to identify property boundaries. All easement tenants will participate in the development of a coordinated land management plan. Activities for protecting the easement property include the replacement of water control structures, construct public observation tower overlooking the Salt Flats, Repair existing salinas roads to ensure the safety of both visitors and staff, and install fence along roads in the Salt Flats to keep the public out of sensitive wetlands. The FWS will obligate restoration funds to achieving desired level of protection.

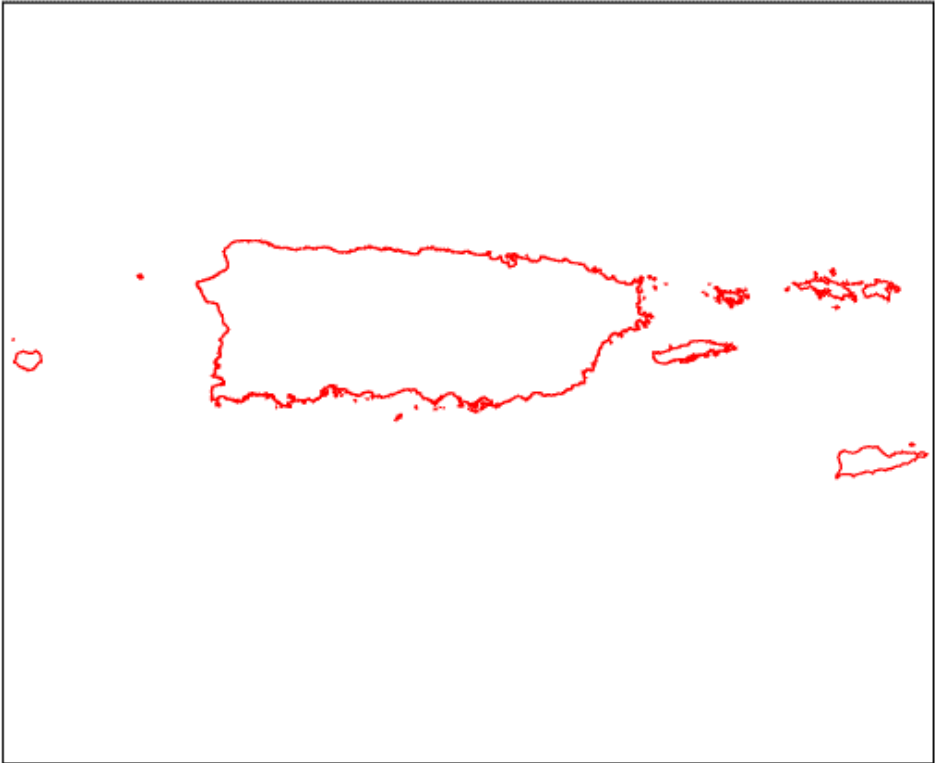
### Outlook

Wetland protection and restoration are important to protect wildlife as well the environment in the Caribbean Area. Additional WRP funds are necessary to help wetland areas achieve the expected program objectives throughout the Caribbean Area.

### State contact

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**Caribbean Area WRP Dollars and Contracts**



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<b>Congressional Districts</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2001</b>		<b>Cumulative Total (97-01)</b>	
	<b>Obligated Dollars</b> (million)	<b>Number of Contracts</b>	<b>Obligated Dollars</b> (million)	<b>Number of Contracts</b>
1	\$1.557	1	\$1.557	1

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